

Nadler: Kill Van Kull Fiasco Shows Red Hook's Importance

Tuesday, 18 April 2006

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Jerrold Nadler held a press conference today in Red Hook, Brooklyn to discuss Red Hook's crucial role New York shipping activities. Last weekend, a container ship ran aground in the Kill Van Kull, the narrow waterway leading to all of the region's other ports, and forced a suspension of all shipping traffic into the ports that lie beyond it. The ship has now been brought to Red Hook for unloading.

The container port in Red Hook serves as the only alternative to the ports on the far end of the Kill Van Kull. In the absence of a container operation in Red Hook — which the City Administration and the Port Authority seem determined to destroy — any long-term blockage of the Kill Van Kull would cripple shipping into the region.

Congressman Nadler's remarks follow as prepared for delivery.

"Good afternoon. Thank you very much for coming out. The issue of maintaining a port in Red Hook, Brooklyn is a critical security issue.

"I have been an advocate and a supporter of the Port of New York and New Jersey for more than twenty years. Red Hook is the only remaining port facility on the eastern side of the Hudson River, and it is of critical importance to New York City and the entire region that this port remain open. All of our current container ports (except Red Hook) lie on Newark Bay: Newark, Elizabeth and Howland Hook. Newark Bay, unfortunately, is on the other side of the Kill Van Kull, a narrow and treacherous body of water that separates Staten Island on the south and Bayonne on the north.

"In the event that a large ship were to sink, or be sunk, in the Kill Van Kull, most of our port would be closed for weeks, or even months, and with it, New York City's import supply chain.

"The security threat posed by having all our ports located in Newark Bay was illustrated this past weekend, when a container ship ran aground in a shallow and rocky stretch of the Kill Van Kull. This ship today has been brought to Red Hook to have its cargo unloaded.

"This incident is one of several occurrences that have taken place over the last few months that have suspended all ship traffic in the Kill Van Kull, from oil spills this past February, to ship collisions, oil terminal fires and other oil spills last year. These mishaps have highlighted concerns that our port is vulnerable to closure — either by intentional or unintentional acts — because it is only accessible via the Kill Van Kull.

"The City Administration and the Port Authority have stated their determination to close the Red Hook cargo facility, which serves as New York City's only deepwater docks, next March. In addition to shedding hundreds of jobs, increasing truck traffic, and raising transportation costs to New Yorkers, this policy would result in all of the port capacity upon which New York City relies being located on the other side of the Kill Van Kull, an arrangement which has great susceptibility to major disruption and to easy attack. We cannot allow that to happen.

"We need commerce and ships coming into the New York side of the Harbor. There is no better location for a deep water container port than in Brooklyn. Instead of arbitrarily ordering the closure of the only container facility in Brooklyn, the City and the Port Authority should be doing everything possible to expand the port in Brooklyn for our safety and security, and for the commerce, jobs, and cheap and efficient delivery of goods and services the Brooklyn port

can provide.

“The current operator, American Stevedoring Inc., whose lease expires in March 2007, plays an important role in our local economy, directly providing more than 500 jobs. These are not low-paying retail or service-oriented jobs, but good high-paying union jobs, with healthcare and pension benefits, jobs that support families who live in the city. I strongly urge the City and the Port Authority to work with this port operator to ensure the long term viability of the port and the survival of these jobs. It is imperative from both an economic and security perspective that this facility be kept open and operating.”

“Thanks very much.”

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